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BOOK REVIEWS

THE SYSTEM OF ANIMATE NATURE. By J. Arthur Thomson. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1920. Two Vols. Pp. vii and v, 687.

Contemporary biologists are concerned largely with ways and means, with analysis of life mechanisms, and with causes and exact—even mathematical—calculations as to these causes and their effects. Natural history has for the time taken a back place in natural science, and the naturalist has given way to the geneticist, the morphologist, the physiologist, and other specialists. But his class is not yet extinct, nor has it lost all of its great proponents. Professor J. Arthur Thomson, of the University of Aberdeen, is a naturalist of the old school. He has a breadth of knowledge and a will to popularize that make one think of Huxley and Hæckel, and a literary style that compares with that of Darwin or that of Gilbert White.

The System of Animate Nature is, according to the announcement of the publishers, the *magnum opus* of a very great scientist. It "carries a message to the general reader and scientist alike, and shows that careful study of the organic world leads to no such fatalism and 'natural irreligion' as has in the past generation been regarded as its logical outcome". The book consists of twenty lectures, each written in admirable English. They purport to give a general survey of the organic world and its bearings upon theology and philosophy. Without question, the completeness of this survey and the clearness with which its essential facts are presented to the reader are the outstanding things about the book.

Professor Thomson has a philosophy of nature and religion that I am not quite able to grasp. It is a sort of mysticism that, resting upon facts and seemingly confined to them, still goes far beyond them. This mysticism has no connection with scientific analysis, yet it strongly colors the author's scientific philosophy and, according to him, inevitably leads to religion. The religion seems to be much like the philosophy—mystical, yet rational to a far greater degree than is common among religions. Those who are orthodox will not be offended by it, although they will probably believe it untrue.. Those who doubt whether science and religion can ever be made good companions will find Professor Thomson's religion one that they can respect, and that will never interfere with scientific progress.

As a survey of the big facts of zoölogy, and particularly of animal evolution, *The System of Animate Nature* is immensely worth while. The second volume is a long discussion of evolutionary facts and theories that, for the general reader as well as the scientist, has few equals. But unfortunately there are several minor, yet rather striking, defects in the work. The statement, in the section on the origin of life, that "As everyone knows, there was a time when the temperature of our earth was beyond the endurance even of the mythical salamander", shows that Professor Thomson is ignorant of some of the most fundamental facts of modern geology. The Laplacian idea of a molten globe was disproved two decades ago, and it is unpleasant to find its ghost haunting biological works to-day. It seems strange, also, that a scientist who has made a special study of the facts of evolution should not take the trouble to correlate them with the facts of earth history, but this Professor Thomson has not done.

He also involves himself in needless difficulties when he argues that consciousness cannot be thought of as arising from motion, and when he maintains the objectivity of beauty. Instead of following the sane, natural, and wholly defensible conclusion that beauty is purely subjective, resting on individual preference, he attempts to show that beauty is something definite, natural, purposed. Now for me, Cezanne's "Man on a Balcony" is very beautiful, and the discords of modern French opera are highly pleasing. Yet I have a friend who believes that art ended with the Barbizons, and that Wagner is the greatest of opera composers. To me an elephant is beautiful, but my friend stands in admiration before a Java finch, which I abominate. And no amount of argument by Professor Thomson or his followers can convince me that either the elephant or the finch, the Cezanne or the Raphael, *Lohengrin* or *Jaquerie*, is of itself beautiful or hideous. There is nothing beautiful unless someone thinks it is beautiful. Beauty is no more objective than art is objective, no more naturally ordained than is what we consider hideousness. The mere fact that a 'hideous' parasite carefully tucks itself out of sight proves nothing more than the fact that it is not advantageous for it to live in the open. If the parasite can think, it is quite satisfied with its own appearance; if it cannot think, it at least cannot be dissatisfied. The idea of beauty as an objective factor in the universe is open to too many objections to count for a great deal.

After all, however, these faults are not great when placed against the many good qualities of the book. They are neither difficult to perceive nor hard to avoid, and they make up a small part of the whole. "The Grand Strategy of Evolution" is interesting and in the main reliable, and demands attention as unique among recent scientific books. Anyone—orthodox, heterodox, or neutral; naturalist, specialist, or philosopher; savant or layman—will find in it a great deal worth careful study.

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THE NEW STONE AGE IN NORTHERN EUROPE. By John M. Tyler. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1921. Pp. 307.

The story of man has been carried back to periods antedating history by a number of capable studies in recent years, especially that of Osborn in his *Men of the Old Stone Age*, to which this work of Professor Tyler's may be regarded as a sequel. Grant's *Passing of the Great Race* is somewhat too radical or one-sided in its theories and H. G. Wells's panoramic romance of history, although it will interest more readers, perhaps, leads too inevitably to certain sociological preconceptions of the author. *The New Stone Age of Northern Europe* is founded partly on facts and partly on scientific imagination so skilfully interwoven as to make an even texture, and its theories are so modestly set forth as to insure their kind reception. It can now be safely admitted, with the author, that "most of the germs, and many of the determinants of our modern institutions and civilization can be recognized in the habits, customs, and life of the Neolithic